Clean energy: the EU’s push for renewables and energy efficiency

Fighting climate change continues to be one of the EU’s priorities. Find out what MEPs have done to boost energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy sources.

In 2016 the European Commission presented a set of clean energy proposals aimed to help fight climate change, as well as reduce the EU's dependency on fossil fuel imports and help households generate their own green energy.

This legislative package is composed of three proposals: one on renewables, one on energy efficiency and one on a control mechanism. In November 2018, Parliament approved the final version of these rules.

Renewables

The share of energy consumed from renewable sources has doubled in the last years, from about 8.5% in 2004 to 17% in 2016. The EU is on track to reach its 20% target for 2020.

In 2014 EU countries agreed this should increase to 27% by 2030. Under new rules approved by Parliament, this should be at least 32%. It will also boost people's right to produce, store and consume their own electricity from renewable sources without having to pay any charges or taxes.

Learn more about the share of renewable energy in EU countries.
Energy efficiency

Energy efficiency improvements could not only reduce CO2 emissions, but also the EU’s annual €350 billion energy import bill. That is why EU lawmakers approved a 32.5% energy efficiency target for 2030.

One important area for improvement is the heating and cooling of buildings, which accounts for 40% of all the energy consumed in the EU. About 75% of them are energy inefficient.

To address this issue, the Parliament adopted new rules on the energy efficiency of buildings in April 2018. According to the rules, EU countries should prepare national long-term strategies to support the renovation of residential and non-residential buildings. The aim is that by 2050 buildings in the EU hardly use any energy.

In addition, in 2017 Parliament simplified energy labels for home appliances, such as lamps, televisions and vacuum cleaners, to make it easier for consumer to compare their energy efficiency.

Control mechanism

MEPs also approved new rules on the so-called governance of the energy union. It is a control mechanism to monitor countries’ progress towards the EU’s energy and climate targets for 2030 and a cooperation tool to fill the gap in case a member state falls behind.

Three pieces of clean energy legislation entered into force on 24 December 2018. EU states will have to transpose the new directives on renewables and energy efficiency into national law.

Discover the measures the EU has taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and find facts and figures on climate change in Europe.

Infographic
Timeline of climate change negotiations
Solar energy could help to fight climate change ©AP Images/European Union-EP

Video